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## Podiatric medical assistant study guide

Medical assistants are trained professionals who assist a physician in treating and diagnosing patients. They perform both medical and administrative duties and may work in clinics, hospitals, outpatient clinics or similar medical facilities. They are a valued member of the medical industry. Here is some information on medical assistants, including training programs, degree levels, duties, and career outlook.

**Degree Level for Medical Assistants** Individuals who aspire to become medical assistants (MAs) have a few different career paths from which to choose. While some receive on-the-job training, most MAs complete formal education or medical assistant training programs. Medical assistant training is available at technical schools, vocational schools, and community colleges. Students can choose certificate, diploma, or associate degree programs. MA certificate or diploma programs usually take 9 months to a year to complete, while associate degree programs take two years to complete. An example of an associate degree MA program might be an Associate of Applied Science in Medical Assisting, Training Programs

The type of training MA students receive has a lot to do with the type of program they've chosen. The main difference between diploma or certificate programs and associate degree programs, besides the duration, is the courses. Diploma and certificate programs focus heavily on the medical courses students need to work on as medical assistants. Students in associate degree programs are required to take the medical courses plus general education courses. MA training consists of coursework, lab studies, and clinical work. The student must complete all three components. The clinical portion is extremely important because it helps students to obtain hands-on training. What Students Learn Students in the MA program learn various practical skills and ideas, including taking and recording patient vital signs; recording patient history; interacting with patients; scheduling appointments; coding paper and electronic health records; preparing blood samples for lab work; administering medications or injections as permitted and performing administrative duties. According to All Allied Health Schools, medical assistant students generally take the following courses in the certificate, diploma and associate degree levels: Patient careAnatomy & PhysiologyMedical terminologyIntro to medical billing and coding proceduresIntercultural communicationsPharmacologyClinical and diagnostic proceduresPhlebotomyMedical ethics and lawsHuman biologyMedical computer applications Students pursuing an associate degree also take general education courses like written communication, chemistry, biology, physics, math, history, and humanities. During the clinical portion of the program, the student completes an internship and works alongside a physician. The student is required to complete a specific number of hours of clinical training depending on the program. The associate degree program provides a more comprehensive and in-depth training than the certificate and diploma programs. Cost of Medical Assisting Programs The cost of medical assistant programs varies by school and by the program. Certificate and diploma programs often charge a flat rate for the program, which includes books, fees, and medical supplies. According to CostHelper, diploma programs can run from \$1,200 - \$4,200, while certificate programs at community colleges can be anywhere from \$2,500 - \$10,000. Associate degree programs typically charge a specific amount per credit but may also charge a flat rate. The cost of an associate degree MA program can run from \$600 - \$5,400 per year for residents. Out-of-state students typically pay higher amounts. Certification Medical assistants are not required to be licensed, and they're not required to be certified in most states. However, many employers choose to hire MAs with certification because certification demonstrates the MAs knowledge and commitment to the field. There are several agencies that offer certification to MAs, such as: American Association of Medical Assistants, National Healthcareer Association, American Medical Technologists, and National Center for Competency Testing. To obtain certification, the candidate must pass a certification exam. The candidate must meet eligibility requirements to be eligible to take the exam. The requirements vary by organization, but most require that the applicant has completed a formal, accredited MA training program. Each organization also has requirements to maintain certification, such as CE credits. Career Outlook Skilled medical assistants have a promising career outlook. The aging population in need of preventative medical services and quality healthcare puts the MA in demand. Having medical assistants on hand to perform clinical and administrative duties allows the physician to see more patients. Medical assistants are expected to see a job growth of 29 percent during the 2016-2026 decade, as reported by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). As of May 2017, medical assistants earned an average annual wage of \$32,480. Medical assistants at the lowest ten percent earned about \$23,830, and those at the top 90 percent earned \$45,900, according to the bureau. Wages can be affected by several factors, including experience, training, certifications, employer and geographic location (BLS). Here are the five top-paying states for MAs along with the mean wage for 2017: Alaska - \$42,060District of Columbia - \$40,570Washington - \$39,700Massachusetts - \$39,310Minnesota - \$39,050 DISCLAIMER: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the site owner or any brands and companies mentioned here. Any content provided by our bloggers or authors are of their opinion, and are not intended to malign any religion, ethnic group, club, organization, company, individual or anyone or anything. This article is purely for reference purposes and does not constitute professional advice and may not be reflective of the best choice for your unique situation. This site strives to provide as much accurate information as possible, however, sometimes products, prices, and other details are subject to change. Therefore, this site does not verify for the accuracy of the information presented in this article. This site does not assume any liability for any sort of damages arising from your use of this site and any third party content and services. Back to Previous Page [PDF-700.60 KB] Medical assistants are essential to the smooth operation of a medical office. They record patient information, schedule appointments and help with clinical procedures, such as injections. Some assistants work in specialty practices, such as for chiropractors, podiatrists or optometrists. In addition to the variety of work, medical assisting has many other career advantages. In most states, you can become a medical assistant with only a high school diploma or the equivalent. High school classes in biology, chemistry and other sciences are helpful. Newly hired graduates usually learn through on-the-job training in topics such as medical vocabulary, office procedures and coding methods. However, some employers prefer assistants who have completed one-year certificate programs or two-year associate degrees in technical schools or colleges. In some states, assistants need special schooling or an examination to do clinical work, such as preparing blood samples. Medical assistant jobs are projected to grow significantly, although wages are less attractive. The trend toward shifting routine work to medical assistants and the needs of an aging society will bring a 31 percent increase in jobs between 2010 and 2020, much faster than average, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The transition to electronic health records will also increase the demand for assistants with knowledge of new computer programs. The average medical assistant earned \$30,170 a year for full-time work in 2011, according to the BLS. Ten percent of medical assistants made \$40,810 per year or more -- less than the annual average of \$41,444 for all employees. Medical assistants can choose from a variety of work environments and locations. In 2011, doctors' offices employed 325,420 of the 539,220 medical assistants nationwide, according to the BLS. An additional 70,000 assistants worked in hospitals, while others worked for podiatrists, optometrists, outpatient care centers, colleges, dentists' offices and research centers. Medical , assistant jobs are plentiful in major cities. As of 2011, the greater Los Angeles area had nearly 24,000 medical assistants, and the New York City area had nearly 13,000. Other metropolitan areas with more than 8,000 jobs included the greater Houston, Chicago, Atlanta, Dallas and Philadelphia areas. Medical assistants have opportunities for advancement through certification or additional studies. According to the American Association of Medical Assistants, those who pass the AAMA examination for certified medical assistant receive higher pay and increased chances for promotion to supervisor or office manager positions, compared with non-certified professionals. Certification requires the completion of an accredited education program, although other organizations offer credentials to any who can pass an exam. Medical assisting is also a steppingstone to a management career for assistants who complete a bachelor's degree in health services or similar field. Medical records assistants deal with clerical and record-keeping concerns in healthcare facilities, such as doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals. They greet patients, help them fill out medical and insurance forms, and file and organize information. The time it takes to qualify for the position depends on the scope of their duties and the needed training. Medical records assistants who approach their position from the medical assistant angle primarily deal with administrative duties, which include handling records and some clinical tasks, such as taking vital signs. They can manage paperwork, answer the non-medical inquiries of patients and schedule appointments. They can receive salaries almost immediately upon graduating from high school because their employers will train them on how to deal with healthcare records and other assisting tasks. Because patient confidentiality is necessary in any medical field, part of their training is about safeguarding healthcare information through correct storage and access procedures. Those who enter their positions with a health information technician background focus on the accurate collection, storage, organization and dissemination of data to medical professionals and reimbursement agencies. Administrative tasks become secondary to their record management duties. Such training may take under a year for those wanting a postsecondary certificate. Associate degrees on the subject are also available, which can take up to two years. Health information technicians may specialize in such positions as Certified Tumor Registrar, which concentrates on processing information for cancer patients. Whatever their tasks and however they approach their positions, medical records assistants can hone personal qualities that can prove useful to their jobs. These may develop in elementary and high schools, and thus do not add any time to training. Interpersonal skills are important because assistants deal with patients who may be suffering pain and with doctors who are under stress. Good orientation to detail ensures proper procedures are followed and that all needed information is collected. Finally, analytical skills are needed to examine and decipher medical histories, charts and physician instructions. The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows no salaries for the specific position of medical records assistants. However, the agency does describe the pay of the two foundation jobs. As of May 2011, medical assistants earned a mean \$30,170 per year, or \$14.51 per hour. Annual ranges started from below \$20,880 and exceeded \$40,810, which equalled an hourly range of \$10.04 to \$19.62. Health information technicians averaged \$35,920 yearly, or \$17.27 hourly. The lowest earning 10 percent made under a mean annual \$21,680, or \$10.42 per hour. The best-paid 10 percent made \$55,170 yearly, or \$26.53 hourly. A medical assistant is an unlicensed health-care worker who provides clerical and clinical support in a clinic or physician's office. Some medical assistants practice only in the front office, performing tasks such as patient registration, making appointments or doing filing and billing. Others perform clinical tasks, such as taking a patient's blood pressure or weight. Some MAs fill both roles. MAs earn an average annual salary of \$30,170, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data from 2011. Most states do not have formal educational requirements to become a medical assistant. Physicians can train their own MAs or hire one who already has some training. An MA usually has at least a high school diploma or GED, and some may have completed a formal program through a vocational school, technical school or community college. Associate degree programs in medical assisting are available in some states. Employers may prefer formal training, and such programs help to ensure that the medical assistant is competent. Regulations vary from state to state, but some states require that a medical assistant graduate from an accredited program or pass a qualifying exam to start working. Others require an exam for certain aspects of patient care, such as taking X-rays. Although it is not required to practice, certification is available for medical assistants from four agencies: the American Association of Medical Assistants, the American Medical Technologists, the National Center for Competency Testing and the National Healthcareer Association. Most of these require that an MA be at least 18 years old to apply for certification, and the MA must re-certify every five years. Medical assistants must have a good grasp of medical diagnoses, especially if they perform billing or coding tasks. An MA should be able to understand medical charts and obtain information quickly to prevent delays in care or long patient waiting times. Accurate records are vitally important in health care to ensure patient safety and accurate billing. The MA should be detail-oriented and precise in all of her documentation. Most workplaces require some degree of computer literacy, especially if the physician or clinic uses an electronic medical record or does electronic billing. The MA should have keyboarding skills that are adequate for the job. An MA should be well-organized; her job is to support the doctor in caring for the patient. MAs must be able to focus on the task at hand to prevent medication errors or other problems that occur due to distractions from activity around them. An MA often works with people who are in pain or emotionally upset, so the ability to maintain a calm manner is a key skill. Many of the skills MAs perform, such as giving an injection or changing a dressing, require good manual dexterity. Note, however, that the rules on whether MAs may give injections vary by state. The MA in a clinical area often spends much of the day on her feet and should possess sufficient physical stamina for the job. Finally, MAs should enjoy working with people. Medical assistants earned a median annual salary of \$31,540 in 2016, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. On the low end, medical assistants earned a 25th percentile salary of \$26,860, meaning 75 percent earned more than this amount. The 75th percentile salary is \$37,760, meaning 25 percent earn more. In 2016, 634,400 people were employed in the U.S. as medical assistants.



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